

Meditation

Meditation

QUESTION: What is the correct definition of Meditation?

ANSWER: Meditation is the prolonged concentration of the mind on a particular object. Any object can be used for the purpose of Meditation: a flower, a mountain, the Sun, the Moon, the Sky, the human body, a sense perception (sound, feel, colour, taste or smell), an emotion, a thought or a religious symbol.

A painter may meditate on a particular subject for his work of art. A poet may meditate on a particular verse. An athlete may meditate on a tournament. A general may meditate on a battle plan. A parent may meditate on how to better look after the children. All these are legitimate objects of Meditation.

However, the Ultimate Goal of life is Unity with the Supreme Being. Therefore, the highest form of Meditation is concentration on the Supreme. In this sense, Meditation may be defined as paying attention to Reality.

Thus the Shiva Puraana says: "Meditation is pondering over Shiva (the Supreme Being)", "Yoga is the concentration of the mind on Shiva", etc.

Meditation or Attention to Reality, results in a higher mode of perception, known as Yogic Sight (Yogi-Pratyaksha) whereby Reality is seen as it really is, undisturbed and undistorted by the perceptions, emotions and thoughts which cloud the vision of Spiritually untutored man.

The perception of ordinary man is known as **ashuddha vikalpa** (impure or wrong thinking or seeing). By contrast, Yogic perception is **Shuddha Vikalpa** (Pure or Right Thinking or Seeing).

The whole purpose of Spiritual life and ultimately, of all life, is the removal of wrong perception or thought and its replacement with Right Thought. Right Thought is acquired by means of: 1) Mantra (Sacred chant which develops an attitude of reverence towards Reality); 2) Sat-tarka (Reflection on Reality) leading to Bhaavana (Contemplation) and Dhyana (Meditation); and 3) Shuddha-vidya (Pure Knowledge of Reality) which arises from the previous two.

It is this higher mode of perception resulting in Pure Knowledge of Reality (Shuddha Vidya) that distinguishes ignorant man (Pashu) from Spiritual man (Yogi). This also makes the difference between other faiths and Yoga. While other faiths, in particular, Western ones, rely on all kinds of man-made beliefs and superstitions, Yoga is based on direct, pure and unadulterated Knowledge of Reality.

What is Reality?

In order to know what to meditate on, pay attention to, or feel reverence for, we must know what Reality is. **Reality (Satya) is that which is.** If a thing is perceived, or experienced, as being, or having existence, then it is real.

Meditation

This is because all experience is a creation of **Consciousness (Chit, Samvid), the Supreme Reality**. Therefore, all experiences are real as a creation of Consciousness. Even imagination or illusion is real in this sense.

However, some things (or experiences) must be admitted to be more real than others on account of their endurance in time and space, importance accorded to them, capacity to affect us, etc.

For example, a persistent thought may be considered to be more real than a passing one; a situation experienced in waking life may be considered as more real than a dream; a severed limb may be said to be more real an injury than a superficial cut, etc.

Therefore, some things are held to be more real than others because they are perceived as such by the person concerned. Other things are held to be more real because they are perceived as such by a group of persons, community, society or mankind in general. Finally, some things are held to be more real because the Supreme Being Himself perceives them as such.

Naturally, the Supreme Being (Shiva, God) perceives Himself as the Highest Reality. Similarly, because the Supreme Being is Eternal, has unlimited power to affect us, indeed, our entire life ultimately depends upon Him, He must be admitted to be the Highest Reality, even by human standards. God, therefore, is the Supreme Reality, the Highest Truth.

In practical life, in order for a thing or experience to be considered real, it must conform to a certain order of things. If, for example, we follow a course of action which results in something of value to us, then that action may be said to be real, right, or true. Conversely, if it results in the opposite, then it may be said to be unreal, wrong, or untrue.

Actions based on man-made concepts of order are likely to be invalidated by actions based on a higher and more enduring order. The Highest, Eternal Order is that of the Supreme Being Himself.

Broadly speaking, therefore, we may say that there are two kinds of Reality (Satya):

1. The Reality of **everyday experience (sammata-satya)** corresponding to impure thought (ashuddha vikalpa)

and

2. The Reality of **Higher Experience (Paramārtha-satya)** corresponding to Pure Thought (Shuddha Vikalpa).

While everyday experience is of value in daily life, it must be somehow validated by Higher Experience. If everyday experience were completely divorced from and unrelated to Higher Experience, it would hardly be better than a hallucination, a dream, or a child's play.

Therefore, everyday experience must bear some relation to Higher Experience. This is why Ultimate Reality (Paramārtha) is so important. Because it infuses commonsense reality with meaning, purpose, value and order.

Meditation

This being so, Ultimate Reality must always be in the background of our thoughts, emotions and actions. Without It, we would be left with no point of reference whereby to judge the reality, meaning, purpose, value and order of any of our experiences and actions.

The Purpose of Meditation

We have stated above that Meditation is the activity of paying attention to Reality. Indeed, ancient texts describe Meditation as "that whereby Yogis see, that is, perceive or experience, Reality".

The Highest Reality is **Supreme Purity and Goodness (Parama Shiva)**. It consists of everything that is Pure and Good: Light, Truth, Eternity, Order, Justice, Compassion, Unity, Harmony, Love, Happiness, Freedom, Life, Intelligence, Beauty, etc.

A thing is true to the extent that it conforms to Ultimate Reality (the Supreme Goodness, the Highest Good) and false to the extent that it does not. In order to know what is true and live our life in accordance with that, we must consciously turn our mind to the Supreme Goodness Which is the Highest Truth.

This turning of our mind to, and concentrating on, the Supreme Truth Who is the Highest Good, is called "Meditation" or "Dhyaana". Meditation enables us to see the Supreme Truth, Goodness and Beauty and live our life in accordance with That, so that it, too, may become Supremely True and Good and Beautiful. This is the true purpose of Meditation.

Types of Meditation

On Earth, there are three levels of reality which are observable by everyone:

1. The Sky, which is the highest.
2. The Sun, Moon and Stars, which is intermediate.
3. The Earth with mountains, rivers, seas, trees, animals and men, which is the lowest level.

Similarly, Ultimate Reality is God (Shiva) Who is Consciousness (Samvid) and Bliss (Aananda). This Consciousness and Bliss (Samvid-Aananda), which is eternally One Undivided Reality, manifests itself as Radiance or Light. Light in turn, manifests itself as animate and inanimate things.

The Universe or totality of Reality (Vishva), therefore, has three distinct levels:

1. God (Shiva), the Supreme Consciousness and Bliss.
2. Light (Prakaasha), God's Power or Divine Spirit (Shakti) whereby He creates the World.
3. The World of objects (Loka), living creatures and man.

Meditation

On the basis of these three levels of Reality, there are three levels of Meditation:

1. Meditation on God, the Supreme Consciousness and Bliss.
2. Meditation on God's Light, the Divine Creative Power.
3. Meditation on God's Creation.

Any thing that is part of God's Creation can be an object of Meditation, provided that we remain constantly aware of the fact that it is a creation or manifestation of God and, in consequence, ultimately One with God.

However, the Highest Manifestation of God in the Physical World is that in which He Graciously appeared on Earth, on the Holy Mount Kailasa (or Meru), at the beginning of the Age of Darkness, in order to impart the Supreme Eternal Truth of Heaven (Sanaatana Dharma) unto the World, so that Mankind might be saved from Darkness, Ignorance and Sorrow.

Meditation on God's Visible Form

It is important to understand from the outset that Yogic Meditation devices (murtis, yantras, etc.) never mean what they appear to mean to the outsider. Moreover, they often carry multiple layers of meaning which can change during various stages of practice and requires detailed explanation by a Meditation Master. Attempting to decipher such images without qualified guidance is like trying to read a book written in an unknown language and therefore is bound to result in gross misunderstandings.

One of the features of Yogic iconography that baffles Westerners, who are known for their limited and rigid conception of the Divine, is the fact that Deities are often portrayed as having several pairs of arms. However, the following facts may be pointed out in response to this:

- 1.** If Western Angels are shown with multiple pairs of wings, there is no logical reason why Eastern Gods cannot similarly have many arms.
- 2.** The fact is that, like the Angels of the West, the Gods of the East are Spiritual Beings who can assume any shape they wish. Consequently, different images may show different manifestations of the same Deity, according to the particular historical and Spiritual situation portrayed.
- 3.** Eastern Gods and Western Angels are the same thing. The fact that, in the West, they are exclusively portrayed as winged humans only means that the Western artistic representation of the Divine is much more restricted, stagnant and fossilised than its Eastern counterpart which has retained the original vibrancy and authenticity of all true Spirituality.

To Yogis, who are well-acquainted with Spiritual realities, the Western notion that Gods (or Angels) retain the same physical appearance for ever is a misunderstanding which is absurd and grotesque in the extreme.

- 4.** The many arms of an Indian Deity are often not arms at all but simply symbolic representations of specific powers, which is only natural if we consider that the Deity in question is itself but a manifestation of the Power of the Supreme. Finally, what is important is not the

Meditation

arms but the hands which display certain symbolic objects or gestures the meaning of which outsiders can have no knowledge of.

Another aspect of Yogic iconography which appears to lie beyond the comprehension of Westerners (and Western-indoctrinated Indians) is nudity. In the ancient tradition of Yoga, the Lord is depicted as being surrounded by Spiritual Beings called Dakinis, Yoginis or Sundaris who often are portrayed in a state of nudity or semi-nudity. Indeed, images of fairies, forest spirits and other Nature Deities (Yakshis, Shalabhanjikas, etc.) wearing scant, transparent or no garments at all, are found at the entrance of most traditional Indian temples.

On a magico-religious level, images of this type are often connected with fertility and sexuality, and the Deities thus represented may be invoked for these purposes by believers. In a purely Spiritual context, however, nudity symbolises a higher consciousness characterised by freedom from material limitations, needs and concerns. In consequence, the above mentioned beings themselves represent higher states of consciousness or planes of existence where the Soul is in **complete harmony and unity** with other Souls, with Nature and with God.

Indeed, ancient religious art often attributes nudity to certain manifestations of Lord Shiva Himself such as Kamadeva (God of Love), Yamantaka (Conqueror of Death), Bhairava (Annihilator) and Bhikshatana Murti (Mendicant Ascetic). One of the earliest examples of this is the Shiva Lingam of the Parashurameshvara Temple at Gudimallam, Andhra Pradesh. Again, this must be understood to be entirely unconnected to distorted Western or Western-influenced concepts of "modesty" or "propriety", being simply symbolic of the fact that God, Who is absolutely free, infinite and above material existence, cannot in any way be subjected, subordinated or otherwise limited or restricted by anything material such as a piece of cloth.

Apart from the fact that it constitutes an unwarranted obscuration of the creative powers of the Divine, clothing, which strictly speaking pertains to the world of man and not to the Higher Worlds of Spirit, may be seen as an undesirable obstacle that stands in the way of unity between human worshipper and God.

Finally, a Meditation Image (Ishta Murti) is also known as "Pratimaa" or "Reflected Image". It is so called because it reflects the Powers, Properties, Qualities or Attributes of the Divine on one hand, and the higher essence in man, on the other. Therefore, it serves as a mirror-like instrument whereby man may become aware of and recognise the Divine in himself. As such, the Murti or Pratimaa is a prime example of a Yogic Instrument of Unification of Consciousness which brings about Unity and harmony between man and his Creator.

Needless to say, there is no limit to such images and their use. For example, for the purpose of ritual worship (puja) in temples or at home, the use of the above mentioned Shiva Lingam and other Symbols of Divinity is permitted. However, for the purpose of Meditation the best object is the **Lord's Visible Form (Murti)** as described below. This kind of Meditation shall be done in the following manner.

The meditator shall sit facing North, towards Mount Kailasa which is the Spiritual Centre of the World. Having purified his mind by briefly thinking on the Eternal Revelation imparted by the Lord of Gods for the Salvation of the World and the Great Prophets and Gurus who are teaching His Way, the meditator (dhyani) must honour Shiva with the following words:

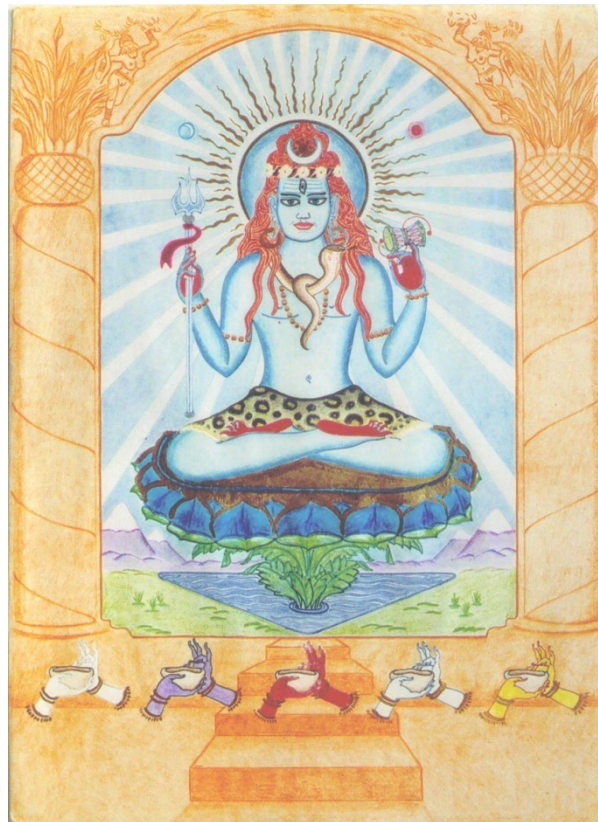
Meditation

"There is no higher Truth than Shiva and Yoga is the Path that leads to Him", "Lord Shiva is my only Refuge" and end with the Holy Chant (Mantra) of Shiva, **"Om Namah Shivaaya"** or **"Eternal Devotion to Shiva"**, while mentally or physically bowing down to His Sacred Image.

If more time is available, the Shiva Mantra shall be repeated 108 times or the multiple thereof, which may be counted on the fingers or by means of a rosary (rudraaksha-mala or string of prayer-beads). Otherwise, Meditation may commence after reciting the Shiva Mantra audibly or mentally just three times.

In the Shiva Puraana, the Lord declares: "He who worships Me with the Five-syllabled Mantra (Na-mah-Shi-vaa-ya) even once, shall attain My Supreme Abode by the might of this Holy Mantra alone."

The great poet and Yoga Master, Utpaladeva of Kashmir, also says: "He who utters the Name of Shiva, grows great through the showering of the sweet, Sublime Nectar. The marvelous power of this Word enters even into the hearts of fools. That Word, which flows like honey from the nectar-filled Crescent of the Moon, that is the Sound of Shiva. Blessed are they who have this Sound ever on their lips!" (Shivastotraavali).



Meditation Image showing various elements of Yogic iconography

Lord Shiva's Visible Form shall be thought of as being seated upon a royal seat, symbolic of Supreme Sovereignty, on the summit of Holy Mount Kailasa, and facing South. Alternatively, He

Meditation

may be meditated upon as seated on a Lotus Flower (symbolic of the World of phenomena) rising out of Lake Maanasa at the foot of Mount Kailasa. He is surrounded by Saints, Sages and Enlightened Yogis. Celestial beings praise His Glory by means of sacred prayers and chants.

His Form has the appearance of a sixteen-year-old youth. (16 symbolises completeness on the analogy of the New Moon becoming Full on the 16th day; youthfulness symbolises the fact that God is Immortal and Ever Existing - hence He never grows old.) His body is translucent and has the colour of the clear blue Sky. (Blue symbolises the Infinite, All-encompassing Universal Consciousness Which contains everything within Itself, like the All-embracing blue Sky.)

He has a beautiful face with large lotus-like eyes and a compassionate smile. His long hair is red like the flames of ignorance-consuming fire and He wears the Crescent Moon upon His brow. The Moon which marks the measurement of time identifies Lord Shiva as Lord of Time (Kaala-Naatha) as well as being symbolic of a New beginning leading to Enlightenment and Rebirth in the Light of Spirit. He who becomes a devotee of Shiva enters upon the Path of Shiva (Shiva Maarga) that leads to Liberation and Unity with the Supreme. Sacred snakes symbolic of eternal life adorn His body. He also wears rudraaksha beads symbolic of devotion and Spiritual practice (saadhana).

He holds in His hands a Hand-drum (Damaru) as a symbol of His Power of Action (Kriyaa Shakti). And a Trident (Trishula or Three-pronged Spear) as a symbol of His Power of Knowledge (Jnaana). By the power of Action, the Supreme Consciousness brings everything into existence. By the Power of Knowledge, Consciousness is aware of all things as manifestations of Itself. The Third Eye on Shiva's forehead symbolises Supreme Wisdom, the Awareness that God, the Supreme Intelligence, alone exists.

Lord Shiva imparts the Supreme Eternal Truth of Heaven (Sanaatana Dharma) to the World, sometimes in words, sometimes through the power of His Mind. He radiates Infinite Intelligence and Bliss in all quarters of the Earth. His Power (Holy Spirit or Shakti) penetrates the meditator's heart, pervading and filling his whole being with boundless love, light and joy.

The meditator must feel strong and fearless on account of the bond of Unity and Love between himself and the Lord. A unique feature of Yoga, which is the Supreme Spirituality of Unity with the Supreme, is that it enables man to establish a true relationship with his Creator which is direct, personal, intimate and strong.

This Bond of Unity with the Supreme is the true essence of Yoga Practice (Saadhana). When we establish this Supreme Bond with God Who is the Supreme Principle of Goodness, then His Infinite Love (Grace, Prasaada) descends upon us and illumines our life. The Flame of Unity with the Supreme burns off all our doubts, misunderstandings and sins.

We then leave all false beliefs behind and are reborn as Beings of Light living in the Supreme Radiance of God. Our Souls are nourished, satisfied and fulfilled by His Infinite Love. We become channels through which the Supreme Goodness of Heaven can flow into the World of man, flooding all with His Gracious Gift (Shiva-Prasaada) of Unity and Love. We become the lamps of God and Stars in the Firmament of Wisdom under which the Kingdom of Shiva may rise and endure for all times.

The Bond of Unity with the Supreme also enables the followers of Shiva to be united and strong so that together they may defeat all Evil and all enemies of Goodness who seek to create Disunity and stand in the way of Shiva's Divine Kingdom on Earth.

Meditation

Meditation on other Religious Figures

Meditation on Western religious figures such as Moses, Jesus or Mohammad is counterproductive and therefore forbidden in Yoga.

Western Faiths may have served a purpose in certain countries in the past, but they do not have sufficient Spiritual knowledge and power to function as a Universal Faith such as Yoga, at present. Moreover, their leaders were not Enlightened Beings, therefore, they cannot lead us to the Highest Truth.

It is not known how Moses, the founder of Modern Judaism died, but we know that other religious founders, for example, Jesus, the founder of Christianity died in great pain with the words, "My God, why have you abandoned me?". Prophet Mohammad, the founder of Islam, also died in pain having been poisoned by a brave Jewish woman in revenge for his robbing and enslaving her tribe.

The great Saint and Prophet of modern India, Shri Ramakrishna, meditated on both Jesus and Mohammad but attained the highest state of Enlightenment only through Meditation on the Supreme Lord (Shiva) and His Divine Power (Shakti). This is only natural, if we consider that Lord Shiva is the Lord of Unity (Lord of Yoga, Yogeshvara) and Supreme Master of Meditation, Spiritual Knowledge and Practice.

It is, of course, natural for Westerners to think that their Spirituality is best. All men - including the most ignorant - take pride in their own culture. However, if we think about it, Indian Spirituality was revealed by the Supreme Being (Parama Shiva) Himself and not by any Western "Prophet" or "God". In consequence, the Spirituality of India is Perfect, Complete and Unsurpassed in every respect. Western Faiths have nothing to teach us.

The fact is that the founders of Western Faiths were not God but mere mortals. Lord Shiva, on the other hand, is God. He is the complete, perfect and full embodiment of the Supreme Principle of Goodness. He was neither born nor did He die, but simply appeared to the World and then returned to His Supreme Abode from where He continues to watch over the World.

Says Scripture: "In every World Age, Lord Shiva incarnates as Teacher of Unity with the Supreme (Yogaacharya) and propagates its Wisdom for the Salvation of His devotees" (Shiva Puraana, Vay. Sam. I, 32:14; II, 8:43, etc.).

Shiva, therefore, is the Supreme Object of Meditation. He is Pashupati, the Supreme Lord and Protector of all creatures. All Souls must seek refuge in His Infinite Embrace.

The adherents of Western Faiths do not meditate on Lord Shiva simply because they are ignorant of the Truth. Their leaders prevent them from gaining knowledge of the True Faith which is the Right Path trodden by the Ancient Masters from the beginning of time. Deprived of true guidance, the Western World blunders about like a blind elephant, trampling everything underfoot. **This is a very important point to understand.**

If we think about it, why do millions of Westerners in "developed" countries like America and Britain go on courses to develop their "emotional intelligence"? Obviously, because their culture has rendered them deficient. If you lack emotional intelligence, how can you have any Spiritual

Meditation

intelligence? Without Spiritual intelligence, how can you know which faith is right and which is wrong? This, in short, is the reason why the Western World is torn apart by Communism, Capitalism, Christianity and Islam. The whole World is suffering because of Western ignorance.

Westerners must give up their pride and prejudice and see the truth of the matter as it is. On their part, India's men of Spirit must do their duty and liberate their Western brethren from the clutches of their devious leaders and lift them out of ignorance into the darkness-dispelling light of the True Faith before the World sinks into further chaos and destruction.

Meditation on Western Religious Figures, therefore, cannot lead us to the Right Path. On the contrary, it is likely to lead us astray, as the wars, genocides, colonialism, slavery, terrorism and other crimes committed by their followers amply demonstrate.

As for Eastern and other Faiths, it is permitted to honour and meditate on Lord Krishna, Mahaavira, Buddha, the Sikh Gurus and the Gods and Goddesses of the Ancient Faiths of Africa, America, Asia, Australia and Europe, at the beginning of the sitting session.

The main Meditation, however, must be done on Lord Shiva Himself Who is the Supreme Principle of Purity and Goodness and the Highest Truth of all. This is the Meditation on God's Visible Form (Murti-Dhyaana).

Meditation on Divine Light

God's Visible Form as described above is just a Manifestation of His Infinite Light. Therefore, when proficiency in the first Type of Meditation has been achieved, the meditator (dhyani) may proceed to meditate on Divine Light (Shiva-Prakaasha or Samvid-Prakaasha).

Just as waves arise from the Sea, rays from the Sun and sparks from Fire, so also all created things arise from God's Infinite Light. For this reason, all forms of light are suitable for the purpose of Meditation: a burning candle or lamp, a fire, the Sun or the Moon.

Of particular importance is Meditation on the flame of a candle, which can be done anytime in one's own home. A burning candle is placed at eye-level on a table or some other furniture in a dark room, and the meditator looks at the flame, without blinking, for a while.

He then closes the eyes and concentrates entirely on the after-image of the flame until it fades away. This is known as "Trataka" or "Steady Gazing". At the same time, the Mantra of Shiva may be mentally repeated with each inhalation and exhalation. This practice is best done in the evening, just before going to sleep.

Gradually, the meditator learns to contemplate on the inner light which appears between and behind the eyebrows even without the aid of a candle. Eventually, he becomes able to Meditate on Boundless Light and merge himself in that until awareness of everything else disappears. This is known as Meditation on Light (Jyotir-Dhyaana).

In the more advanced phases of the above described stage, the meditator must attempt to identify himself with that inner light. This awareness of oneself as light must be maintained at all times, as far as possible, even outside the Meditation session. Finally, the meditator must develop

Meditation

the awareness of all things as consisting of light. In this way, a high degree of unification of experience (and consciousness) is achieved.

Meditation on Consciousness

At the highest stage, which we shall now describe, Meditation is done on Consciousness Itself.

It will be remembered that the Highest Goal of Yoga, which is the Spirituality of Unity, is Unity with the Supreme. Meditation, therefore, means not just paying attention to Reality, but also getting closer to, and finally becoming One with, Reality. Until that moment, one's life is more like a dream that needs to be corrected by more real experiences until it coincides in all respects with Reality Itself.

While in the first stage of Meditation Practice we open ourselves up to a Higher Reality, in the second we get closer to It and, in the third, we become One with It.

We have shown above how the first degrees of Unification are attained. The final degree is rather more difficult to explain and requires experience and qualified guidance to understand.

However, an inkling of this may be obtained by means of the **Five States (Pancha-Avasthaa)**. There are three basic states of consciousness which are experienced by all humans to various degrees: Waking, Dreaming and Deep Sleep. These are recognised by all branches of Western Psychology.

To Yogis, these states are just various forms of Sleep in which true Psychology or Knowledge of Spirit (Aatma-Jnaana) is impossible. To acquire True Knowledge, Meditation is required as a means of exploring higher dimensions of experience. Indeed, Yogis know two states of consciousness above the ordinary three which culminate in the Universal Consciousness itself.

In this sense, Meditation is the deliberate and systematic entrance into the Unconscious or the Mind of God (the Supreme Consciousness) which is called "Unconscious" because it exists outside the sphere of experience of the Spiritually unawakened human consciousness.

Thus, the process of Meditation commences with the Waking State (Jaagrat Avasthaa) in which the meditator (dhyani) gazes with devotion upon an Image of God (Murti or Pratimaa) Who is the Supreme Intelligence. In this phase, although the meditator is awake in the conventional (sammati) sense of the word, he is asleep or un-Awakened (Abuddha) from the perspective of Ultimate Reality (Paramaarthaa).

In the second phase, the meditator closes his eyes and directs his conscious attention inwards, entering the Dream State (Svapna Avasthaa). This is the first stage of Spiritual Awakening (Sambodhi, Buddhatva) in which the Seeker begins to gain control over his own mental states and, in consequence, becomes an Awakened One (Buddha).

In the third phase, the meditator enters the Unconscious or State of Deep Sleep (Sushupti Avasthaa). By retaining his full consciousness in this state in which ordinary people are fast asleep, the Seeker becomes a Well-Awakened One (Prabuddha).

Meditation

In the fourth phase, the meditator frees himself from the last limitations of the mind and, penetrating the Veil of Maayaa (the "Cosmic Magic" or "Unconscious" proper), he reaches the realm of Pure Consciousness and awakens to the reality that he is a Conscious Soul, a living orb of light. This is called the Fourth State (Turya Avasthaa), having attained which, the Seeker becomes a Perfectly Awakened One (Suprabuddha).

Finally, in the fifth phase, the meditator enters the State-beyond-the-Fourth (Turyaatita Avasthaa) which is the State of Absolute Unity of Consciousness and he enjoys the Supreme State of Nirvaana which is Total Identity with the Supreme (Shiva Nirvaana, Shivatva, etc.). In this Supreme State, the Yogi becomes the Ever Awake (Sadaa Buddha), the Original Waking One (Aadi Buddha), the Lord of Yoga (Yogendra) and Greatest God (Mahaadeva) Himself - Which he has always been without realising it.

To better understand this Process of Identification with the Supreme it is essential to understand that all things are made of Consciousness. Therefore, in any perception or experience, it is Consciousness perceiving or experiencing Itself.

Consciousness is, by definition, a force which has the unique capacity of being aware of itself. Nothing else can be aware of itself except Consciousness. This essential capacity Consciousness has of being aware of itself, is the very Power which drives the Seeker of Unity, and elevates him, towards the Supreme Experience of Unity with Ultimate Reality.

While Supreme Consciousness always remains absolutely Pure and Free from all impurities, imperfections and limitations, human consciousness becomes contaminated and clouded by psychological sediments resulting from everyday experiences and is mostly - though not entirely - unable to perceive itself. A purification process must be applied to cleanse it of all debilitating sediments in the same way as a Mirror (Bimba) or some other shining object needs polishing in order to regain its original reflective quality.

Says Scripture: "Just as a Mirror or disc of gold or silver covered by dirt shines brilliantly again when cleansed well, the embodied one, on perceiving his true Self, becomes one with that and abides self-fulfilled and free from sorrow" (Shvetaashvatara Upanishad III, 2:14).

One of the key techniques in this context is the constant awareness of the background of all experience. When perceiving light, for example, the meditator must develop the awareness of the Reality which is aware of the light and, as before, strive to identify himself with That.

Of particular importance is the development of the awareness that one is not the body, one is not the mind, one is the Light within, the Light of Consciousness (Samvid-Prakaasha) Itself.

In other words, awareness must be shifted away from the object of experience to the Luminous Experiencing Consciousness itself. Not the **"seen"** but the **"Seer"** is what matters.

This Self-Identity or Recognition of one's Higher Self with the Supreme is facilitated by means of the Mantra "Shivoham" ("I am the Supreme"). When correctly understood and assimilated, this Mantra enables the Seeker to rise to higher and higher states of Consciousness - or aspects of himself.

Says the Shiva Puraana: "With the awareness, 'I am Shiva', one shall perform the Shaivite rites of Meditation, Knowledge and the rest".

Meditation

The Upanishad equally declares: "When the Yogi by means of the Lamp of Knowledge of the Self beholds the nature of Reality, the Unborn, Unchanging and Unblemished, by knowing That, he is free from all bondage" (Shvet. Up. III, 2:15).

Thus from light to light the Seeker arrives at the Light of all lights: the Great Light (Mahaa Prakaasha), the Great Life (Mahaa Sattaa), Supreme Reality (Parama Artha) Itself. This is the Meditation on Consciousness (Samvid-Dhyaana) which is the highest Meditation of all and the Supreme Spirituality.

It goes almost without saying that not all Souls can attain Supreme Enlightenment in this life time. This inability is caused by Karma and the Will of God. However, failure to attain Enlightenment in this life, does not mean to say that we have to give up on Spiritual Practice.

Life is Spiritual and must be lived with Spirit in mind. It is the duty of all creatures to live in Unity with their Creator. The fact is that Yoga, or Unity with the Divine, is not a choice but the Highest Duty which we all, from King to street sweeper must discharge to our best ability. Therefore, Yoga must be practised to the very end.

Observations on the Practice of Meditation

Meditation is best practised two or three times a day, in particular, in the early morning or late evening, at least for a few minutes at a time. Twenty or thirty minutes is even better, whenever possible.

The higher stages of Meditation are not for beginners. The first stage, Meditation on God's Visible Form (Murti-Dhyaana), can be practised by all to various degrees. It is the best to begin with.

Concentration techniques like focusing on the breathing, counting, the "candle exercise" ("trataka") etc., are valuable aids in the development of the power of concentration, attention, observation and visualisation. They also develop our intelligence, strengthen our memory and stimulate the opening of the third eye.

The study of Yogic texts, association with Spiritually-minded people, listening to Spiritual music, participating in religious and cultural events, doing charity work, spreading awareness of the true Teachings of Yoga, are indispensable means of progress on the Path.

One of the main obstacles to progress in Meditation is the desire to attain quick progress. This is part of a wider strategy adopted by the unawakened mind (or ego, "ahamkaara"), namely, to manipulate Divine Will and twist it for one's own personal purposes. This strategy is doomed to fail and is best avoided from the very beginning in order to save oneself a lot of trouble.

The true purpose of Meditation is not to bring the Supreme under our control but to harmonise our life with the Supreme.

Meditation

As explained in the Scriptures, while some degree of Enlightenment can be achieved already in this birth, the Highest Goal may take three life times to attain depending on Karma and the Will of God. Therefore, patience and perseverance are the best approach.

Another obstacle is misusing Spiritual Practice for the purpose of escaping reality. This also is doomed to fail. We all have a destiny to fulfil. Very few Souls are qualified to "leave everything behind" and merge with the Absolute. Nor is it for them to decide. Therefore, follow the Path of Spirit without neglecting other duties.

What matters to true men of Spirit, who are Seekers of Unity with God, is to always do the Will of Shiva and obediently follow His Supreme Command. What His Command is, may be gathered from Scriptures, the teachings of the Yoga Masters (Gurus), reason and Revelation.

In this context, it is imperative to understand that, although Meditation is the best means of attaining true Happiness, it is not always the best **immediate solution** to all the problems in the World. We cannot sit down and meditate when people around us need our help.

If such a situation arises, we must take immediate action while, at the same time, inwardly maintaining a state of calmness, detachment and devotion to the Supreme, as far as possible.

For this reason, in the Bhagavat Gita, the Lord does not ask the hero (Arjuna) to sit down and meditate, but to take action in the form of fighting the enemy, as a matter of holy duty (Sva-Dharma).

Meditation, therefore, must not be used as a substitute for action. Rather, it must be used as a means of drawing inspiration for our actions.

The great Saint and Prophet, Shri Shankaracharya, was a great meditator. He loved the Supreme above all else. Yet he was never inactive. He would roam the country from one end to the other, tirelessly preaching the Word of God. He founded many societies, schools and organisations, Spiritual, charitable and military.

Another great Spiritual Master and Prophet, Shri Abhinava Gupta, says: "If one who has attained Enlightenment were to give up all worldly activities, this would result in chaos, for ordinary men would lose faith in the established path and grow indifferent to right knowledge and right conduct...The wise one understands that it is the Supreme Lord Himself Who is the performer of all activities and Who acts through him. He therefore surrenders all his activities to the Lord and engages in action for the sake of others as if he were at war (that is, like a warrior in battle who fights fearlessly to the death as a matter of holy duty)" (Gitaartha Samgraha, 3: 25-30).

Meditation or Spiritual Practice must never be confused with inaction. Meditation and Activity, Knowledge and Action, Jnaana and Kriyaa, are not mutually exclusive but complementary. They are the very heart of life. Like the two wings of a bird, they enable us to rise higher and higher.

God Himself is not inactive. He creates the World. He punishes the wicked and liberates His devotees. The Scriptures are full of His wonderful deeds. As the Sun shines and Fire burns, so also the Supreme Intelligence acts. Man cannot think that he is above God. What is required of

Meditation

us is not to be inactive but to act intelligently, just like God. Only in this way can we do His Divine Will.

God has put us in this World for a good purpose. We must not offend Him by asking Him to take us away. Rather, we must pray for Divine Guidance that we may know the Right Path and the true course of action in this world.

Shiva is our Lord and Master, and also our Supreme Example. We must look into our heart and ask ourselves, "What would He do if He were in our place?"

Just think! Would the Lord of Unity and Goodness convert to the Religion of Evil and Discord? Did Shiva remain inactive when Raavana attempted to storm His Celestial Abode? Did He silently suffer Daksha's blasphemous offence? When Evil is persistent, shall Goodness give in? By no means!

The Holy Land of India, in particular, **urgently** needs a new generation of Spiritual Seekers who are not afraid to put into practice the insight and inspiration gained in Meditation.

Every man, woman and child has inner enemies such as ignorance, selfishness, greed, envy, laziness and fear. These are deadly enemies which feed on the strength of the Soul and lead to Spiritual death. Therefore they must be combated with all our strength. However, we also have external enemies who seek to enslave us and lead us to destruction. They are the followers of false religions who seek to impose their rule upon the World. They have great military and financial power. They cannot be defeated through meditation but only through forceful action. Seeing that the Country, Nation or Community is under attack by enemy forces we cannot just sit down and meditate. On the contrary, it is our duty to stand up and take every action that is required to eliminate the danger and exterminate the enemy once and for all.

When his brothers and sisters are being oppressed and murdered throughout the World it cannot be right for a follower of the True Faith (Sat Dharma) to concern himself with his own Spiritual progress. The true believer forgets his own preoccupations and fearlessly rises to the defence of his brethren.

As the Holy Scriptures say, we live in the Age of Darkness. It will be a long and difficult struggle. However, we must remember that the meaning of Yoga or Unity is to combine all our efforts, Spiritual, emotional and material, and ensure that the True Faith will prevail.

Yogis who are the Guardians of Righteousness on Earth, cannot abandon the World and leave this beautiful Planet to Maoists, Jihadists, Missionaries, Colonialists and other agents of Western Imperialism and Oppression.

Therefore we say, Victory to Lord Shiva, Who is the Highest Truth, Whose Path is the Supreme Stairway to Heaven and Whose devotees shine like the brightest of Stars! (See also Obstacles on the Yoga Path.)